



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Telecommunications Coordinators

FROM: Frank Cavallaro, Manager  
Bureau of Communication and Computer Services

DATE: February 16, 2000

SUBJECT: Policy Statement Regarding Family Radio Service (FRS) Radios

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It is the practice of the Multi-Agency Communications Services Section (M-ACSS) to establish specifications for open-ended contracts to purchase radio communications equipment which is technologically current and takes into consideration many factors, including existing and proposed Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules and regulations. Toward this end, all radios on state contract are required to be PC programmable for frequency, squelch, and channel spacing where applicable. They must also be equipped to operate on frequencies which are specifically set aside by the FCC for Local Government use.

Family Radio Service (FRS) radios are generating considerable interest, primarily because of their low cost. Certainly, they are relatively affordable. However, the radios M-ACSS is familiar with do not meet established specifications for even the least expensive radios on state contract. The frequencies are not compatible with any of those in the Local Government Radio Service and none of the functions are PC programmable. They will only accommodate wideband frequencies and the FCC is promoting the use of narrow band for the future of wireless communications.

FRS radios share the same fourteen available frequencies. No FCC license is required and there is no coordination required or available to ensure a minimum interference Radio Frequency (RF) environment. Since FRS radios have the same frequencies, there is no way to prevent sensitive communications from being intercepted and monitored by other users, and also no way to prevent other users from interfering (intentionally or not). Since no license is required, it would be virtually impossible to identify the source of any such interference.

Finally, the Family Radio Service was intended to be "a short distance, two-way personal radio service. Its purpose is to provide families, friends, and/or associates participating in group outings a way to communicate with members of the group who are out of speaking

range or sight but still in the same general area.<sup>1</sup> Governmental use of FRS radios, although not specifically prohibited, clearly does not fall within the guidelines used by the FCC for establishing the Family Radio Service.

Having considered the above, it is the policy of the Multi-Agency Communications Services Section of the Illinois State Police, Bureau of Communications Services, to recommend that CMS disapprove of any request for the purchase of FRS radios for state use. State agencies, employees and officials shall be required to utilize frequencies which are set aside specifically for governmental use.

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Communications Commission Report No. DC96-44 5/14/96